

Frequently Asked Questions
FY 2011 DOE Office of Science Early Career Research Program
Version 3, Updated July 30, 2010

Eligibility

Q: How does the DOE Office of Science define “early career”?

A: Principal Investigators are within 10 years of receiving a Ph.D. and are either untenured assistant professors on the tenure track, untenured associate professors on the tenure track, or full-time, nonpostdoctoral, permanent DOE national laboratory employees.

Q: The funding announcement states, “...a Principal Investigator may not participate in more than three Office of Science Early Career Research Program competitions.” Does submission of a preapplication count as participation?

A: No. Participation in the competition is defined as submission of a full application.

Q: Is the program limited to Principal Investigators (PIs) who are U.S. citizens?

A: No, but the PI must be employed by either a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

Q: Can postdoctoral fellows apply for awards under the DOE Early Career Research Program?

A: Postdoctoral fellows may not apply directly. However, a PI may include postdoctoral support for the project in the proposed budget.

Q: If I have previously won an early career award from another agency or a nonprofit, am I eligible?

A: Yes.

Q: Are research professors eligible?

A: No. In universities, only untenured assistant professors or untenured associate professors on the tenure track with Ph.D.’s earned within the past ten years are eligible.

Q: If I received an Office of Science Early Career Research Program award last year, am I eligible?

A: No.

Q: If I have an early career award from a previous Office of Science early career program sponsored by an individual program office (e.g., Outstanding Junior Investigator; Junior Faculty Award; Early Career PI), can I apply?

A: Yes. If you are selected for an award, though, you must forgo the remaining years of funding for the current award when the new award begins. **Note: Winners of the FY2010/Recovery Act Office of Science Early Career Research Program are not eligible. This FAQ addresses only the previous program-specific opportunities superseded by the new Early Career Research Program, which began last year.**

- Q: I am an untenured assistant or associate professor on the tenure track and have applied for tenure but have not yet received it. Am I eligible?**
A: You are eligible if you are untenured but still on the tenure track as of the proposal due date of November 9, 2010.
- Q: I am currently part time at a national laboratory but will convert to full-time status beginning in September. Am I eligible?**
A: You are eligible if you meet the eligibility requirements as of the proposal due date of November 9, 2010.
- Q: I am an untenured associate professor on the tenure track. Am I eligible?**
A: Yes.
- Q: I have accepted a position as an untenured assistant or associate professor on the tenure track at a U.S. academic institution, but I have not yet begun the job. Am I eligible?**
A: You must be employed in the position on the proposal due date, November 9, 2010.
- Q: I have accepted a position as a full-time permanent non-postdoctoral DOE national laboratory employee, but I have not yet begun the job. Am I eligible?**
A: You must be employed in the position on the proposal due date, November 9, 2010.
- Q: I have earned two Ph.D.'s. One is within the ten-year eligibility window, and one is not. Am I eligible?**
A: If a person has multiple Ph.D.'s, the discipline of the one they have earned within the ten-year eligibility window should be relevant to the proposed idea.
- Q: I previously won a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). Am I eligible?**
A: Yes. Previous winners of PECASE are eligible. If you received your PECASE award through the DOE Office of Science and the award is still active, you must forgo the remaining years of funding for the current award when the new award begins.
- Q: My national laboratory has certain appointments not considered permanent but also not considered postdoctoral. Are people in these appointments eligible?**
A: To make this determination, the laboratory director should work with Dr. Linda Blevins of DOE to answer the following set of questions generically for the type of appointment (and not for any individual currently occupying the appointment): (1) Is the appointment considered to be a postdoctoral position? (2) Is an appointee in this position an employee of the national laboratory? (3) Is it the laboratory's intention at the time the appointment is made to transition the appointee to career employment status when the appointment ends? (4) Is the appointment considered to be full time? (5) Does the appointment type qualify for the full benefits of a career employee (as opposed to a reduced benefits package that might be provided for a postdoctoral employee)? If the answer to the first

question is no and the answer to each of the remaining questions is yes, the type of appointment is eligible.

Q: Is our academic institution required to supply any documentation certifying a Principal Investigator's tenure status and appointment in a tenure-track position?

A: We do not require such certification, but a submission through the institution implies you have made such a determination. The cover page of the proposal asks for position title, tenure status, and year of Ph.D..

Q: I already have funding for a regular university grant through the DOE Office of Science. Am I eligible?

A: Yes, but you must propose new research.

Q: I defended my Ph.D. dissertation in 1999, but I graduated in 2000. Am I eligible?

A: If the Ph.D. conferment date posted on the academic transcript is a date in 2000, you are eligible.

Q: I am a Ph.D. candidate, but I have not yet received my Ph.D. Am I eligible?

A: You must have a Ph.D. as of the proposal due date, November 9, 2010.

Q: I am a U.S. national employed by a non-U.S. academic institution. Am I eligible?

A: No. You must work at a U.S. academic institution or a DOE national laboratory.

Q: Am I required to be PECASE-eligible to apply for the Office of Science Early Career Research Program?

A: No. PECASE eligibility is not required for the program, but we will not be able to nominate you for a PECASE later if you do not qualify for PECASE.

Budget

Q: What is the lower limit on the proposed budget?

A: The minimum award size is \$150,000 per year for five years for universities and \$500,000 per year for five years for DOE national laboratories.

Q: What is the upper limit on the proposed budget?

A: There is no upper limit, but you should keep your budget as close to the minimum as possible.

Q: Does the minimum budget specified in the announcement include indirect costs?

A: Yes, the minimum budget includes both direct and indirect costs.

Q: Can there be a co-Principal Investigator on my proposal?

A: No.

Q: May I have a paid collaborator on my proposal?

A: Our intention is to fund projects directed and executed by the early career Principal Investigator (PI). In rare cases where a collaborator (either early career or senior) brings something unique to the project, support will be considered. However, our preference is that you propose a project with research support staff (e.g., students, postdocs), travel, supplies, equipment, and other necessary expenses for the PI-led project.

Q: May I propose equipment and/or travel support?

A: Yes.

Q: Can the budget contain funding for graduate students and other participants?

A: Yes.

Q: Why is the minimum laboratory award larger than the minimum university award?

A: The university award is intended to pay up to three months' summer salary for the Principal Investigator (PI) to supplement the normal, academic-year salary. The laboratory award is intended to pay the year-round PI salary. Also, universities can involve students part-time in research, while laboratories generally rely on full-time staff to support their research projects. The minimum university award is competitive with similar programs at other agencies. This is the only such award of its type available to DOE national laboratory scientists.

Q: Does this program require cost sharing?

A: No.

Q: The announcement provides a minimum cumulative award size. Must this minimum budget be distributed equally over the five award years or can it be distributed in any way as long as the five-year total equals the minimum award size?

A: You can distribute the budget any way you'd like, but make sure that the cumulative budget is about equal to the minimum award size. If possible, we ask university applicants to aim to spend about \$150k per year and laboratory applicants to aim to spend about \$500k per year. Laboratory Principal Investigators must charge at least 65% of salary to the award each year of the award.

Preapplication and Proposal

Q: Is the deadline for preapplication submission really 4:00 a.m. Eastern Time on Friday, August 13, 2010?

A: Yes, the deadline time is 4:00 a.m. Having this deadline should result in applicants distributing their submissions over time. The best idea is to submit your preapplication well before this deadline.

Q: I plan to submit a pre-application for the Early Career Research Program. The pre-application form requires identifying a "Certifying Representative." Who should this person be?

A: Generally, this is a contact in the sponsored research office of a university or the financial/management office of a lab. It could also be a department financial representative. It should be somebody other than the Principal Investigator who could be asked administrative or financial questions relating to the preapplication or application.

Q: Is the preapplication required, and will it be used to select a reduced number of proposals for full submission?

A: Yes. Preapplications will be reviewed for responsiveness of the proposed work to the research topics identified in this funding announcement. DOE will send a response by email to each applicant encouraging or discouraging the submission of a formal application by Tuesday, September 14, 2010. Only those applicants that receive notification from DOE encouraging a formal application may submit full applications. No other formal applications will be considered.

Q: Is there a required format for the preapplication?

A: The preapplication attachment should include, at the top of the first page, the following information:

Title of Preapplication
Principal Investigator Name, Job Title
Institution
PI Phone Number, PI Email Address
Year Doctorate Awarded: 20XX
Funding Announcement Number:

This information should be followed by a clear and concise description of the objectives and technical approach of the proposed research. The preapplication may not exceed two pages, with a minimum text font size of 11 point and margins no smaller than one inch on all sides. No biographical data need be included.

Q: May I submit more than one preapplication? Alternately, may I submit the same preapplication to multiple programs?

A: No. You may submit only one preapplication.

Q: Is the dollar amount I enter into the online preapplication required to match the dollar amount in the full-application budget?

A: No. We are only looking for an estimate at the time of preapplication submission.

Q: Does the Principal Investigator submit the preapplication or does the sponsored research office submit it?

A: We have no preference. The acknowledgment email will go to the Principal Investigator's email address. The web form does require that contact information for both the investigator and a certifying official be entered. The certifying official is someone who can field administrative or financial questions about the preapplication.

Q: If I include citations on the preapplication, are they required to be within the 2-page limit and with a minimum text font size of 11 point?

A: Yes, you must fit everything you submit in your preapplication within the two allowed pages. If you choose to include references, they must fit in the two-page limit.

Q: May I include figures in my preapplication?

A: Yes, you may include figures within the two pages, but do not exceed two pages under any circumstances.

Q: How does my university submit a full application?

A: Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. The Funding Opportunity Number is DE-FOA-0000395 and the CFDA Number for the Office of Science is 81.049. The deadline for submission into Grants.gov is 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, November 9, 2010. Late applications will not be accepted. Only those applicants that receive notification from DOE encouraging a formal application may submit full applications.

Q: Do you require an educational or outreach component in the application?

A: No.

Q: I work for a U.S. academic institution. Do you require a letter from my department chair with the application?

A: No.

Q: The announcement states that I must include several pieces of information (e.g., for academic institutions, Institution; Street Address/City/State/Zip; Principal Investigator (PI); Position Title of PI; Business Mailing Address of PI; Telephone Number of PI; Email of PI; Funding Opportunity Announcement; DOE/Office of Science Program Office; Topic Area; Topic Area Technical Contact; Year Doctorate Awarded; Is the PI in a Tenure-Track Appointment? (Yes or No); Does the PI have tenure (Yes or No); and PECASE Eligible) on the first page of the narrative. Does this header information count within the 15 page limit?

A: You may place this information on a separate cover page outside of the narrative.

Q: What mailing address should I list on my proposal?

A: Please list your professional or work mailing address (not your home address).

Q: I would like to submit a proposal with a title and/or topic different from the one in the preapplication I submitted. Is this allowed?

A: No.

Q: Should the list of current and pending support in the proposal include startup funds provided by my university?

A: No.

Q: I am at a DOE national laboratory and will submit a full proposal. Does the submission deadline apply to getting the proposal to the DOE site office or does it apply to getting the proposal to DOE headquarters?

A: Proposals should be submitted by the laboratory to the site office through Searchable FWP by the submission deadline of 11:59 pm EST November 9th. The site offices will release all of them to DOE headquarters. Late proposals will not be accepted.

Q: I am at a DOE national laboratory. To whom should the letter from the laboratory director be addressed?

A: It can be addressed to the relevant technical point of contact from the announcement.

Q: How can I locate the format requirements for the full proposals?

A: For academic institutions, you must download the full Funding Opportunity Announcement from FedConnect. You can do this by visiting the website <https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/?doc=DE-FOA-0000395&agency=DOE> and clicking on "BODY" in the upper right hand corner of the screen. For DOE national laboratories, the proposal format requirements can be found in the laboratory announcement on our Grants and Contracts website (http://www.sc.doe.gov/grants/LAB10_395.html).

Q: Must I register in FedConnect to download the university Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)?

A: You don't need to be registered with FedConnect to access the full announcement; it is open and available to the public without a password. Here is how to get to it with a direct link into FedConnect: Go to the website

<https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/?doc=DE-FOA-0000395&agency=DOE>.

Once you get to this page, look at the right hand corner of the page. You will see headings that say

DE-FOA-0000395

Solicitation

Overview

BODY

Click on "BODY" to obtain a pdf of the full announcement. (You can also go to

<https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/> and select "Search Public Opportunities."

Under "Search Criteria," select "Reference Number." Enter DE-FOA-0000395 and push

the "Search" button. Click on "Office of Science Early Career Research Program." Then select "Body" in the upper right hand part of the page.)

Q: Is there a limit on the number of proposals that may be submitted by an institution?

A: No.

Q: In my field, there are routinely more than ten and sometimes hundreds of co-authors of archival publications. If I list every co-author on every paper, my biographical sketch will exceed the three-page limit. May I abbreviate the author lists?

A: Yes. You may use an abbreviated style such as the *Physical Review Letters* (PRL) convention for citations (list only the first author). For example, your paper may be listed as, "A Really Important New Result," A. Aardvark et. al. (MONGO Collaboration), PRL 999. You may also use this convention in the proposal bibliography.

Q: Can the research I propose overlap with other research for which I am already funded by DOE or any other agency?

A: The proposal should not duplicate your currently funded research, regardless of the agency funding it. You should propose new research. There is one exception (see the next question).

Q: I am a current recipient of one of the previous program-specific junior investigator awards (ASCR Early Career PI Program; FES Plasma Physics Junior Faculty Award Program; HEP Outstanding Junior Investigator Program; NP Outstanding Junior Investigator Program) and would like to apply for the new Office of Science Early Career Research Program. Can the idea I propose for the new program overlap with the idea for which I am already funded in the other program?

A: Current recipients of one of the above awards must forgo the remaining years of funding for the current award when the new award begins. The idea proposed can overlap with the research already funded, but the proposed work should exclude 2009 progress and begin with new efforts proposed for 2010 and beyond. **Note: Winners of the FY2010/Recovery Act Office of Science Early Career Research Program are not eligible. This FAQ addresses only the previous program-specific superseded by the new Early Career Research Program, which began last year.**

Q: Several early career investigators at my national laboratory would like to work together to solve a large problem. Can we propose one large award of two to four times the minimum budget with multiple early career investigators?

A: No. This is a single-Principal Investigator (PI) program. Our intention is to fund projects directed and executed by one early career PI.

Q: My idea seems to cut across two of the programs described in the funding announcement. How should I handle this?

A: You should select a single program to be the primary one to which the preapplication is submitted. The programs may move preapplications/proposals or even co-review certain

proposals, but that will be decided by the Office of Science program managers after all of the preapplications/proposals are received.

Q: Even though letters of support are not allowed, will you accept letters of collaboration?

A: Our preference is to support PI-led efforts without paid collaborators. If either an unfunded or funded collaboration is proposed, the best place to add the optional letters of collaboration is Appendix 6 (Other Attachments).

Q: Is it necessary for technical support staff (e.g., postdocs or students) to be on board at my institution at the time the proposal is submitted?

A: No.

Q: I am an eligible PI at a U.S. academic institution. Am I required to make contact with or collaborate with a DOE national laboratory for a successful proposal?

A: No. Your proposal will be evaluated using the merit review criteria in the announcement, and collaboration or contact with a national laboratory is not required.

Q: If I choose to support graduate students or postdocs using a grant from the Office of Science Early Career Research Program, are they required to be U.S. citizens?

A: No.

Q: I did not submit a preapplication. May I submit a full proposal?

A: No.

Review, Selection, and Award Management

Q: What happens if I select the wrong program when I submit my proposal?

A: If an idea is submitted to a program for which it is a bad fit, we will move the proposal to the more appropriate program for review. However, the idea must fit within the topics described in the announcements to be successful.

Q: If I am selected for an early career award from another agency at the same time I am selected for one from DOE Office of Science, may I accept both of them?

A: You are allowed to receive both awards. However, you will not be funded twice for the same work. Make sure you keep the ideas you propose to the two agencies distinct if you want to accept both awards.

Q: How will the proposal review be conducted?

A: Review of the proposals will be handled in the programs using the review criteria established in the announcement. Proposals may be reviewed by either mail review or panel review or some combination of both. Each program will decide individually on its review method. Large numbers of proposals are generally handled by panels. The best way to prepare for the review is to learn about the review criteria and proposal format by reading the full announcement. If you write your proposal to be responsive to the review

criteria, to fit in with the Office of Science mission areas, and to follow the required format, you will be ready for any review process.

Q: What is a reasonable start date for the award?

A: We suggest a start date of June 15, 2011.

Q: Will this program be offered next year?

A: Our intention is to continue this program on an annual basis, subject to availability of funds. Each Principal Investigator (PI) may only submit one Office of Science Early Career Research Program proposal per annual competition, and a PI may not participate in more than three Office of Science Early Career Research Program competitions over time.

Q: If I receive Office of Science Early Career Research Program funding and subsequently get tenure, can I keep the award for its remaining years or must it stop once I get tenure?

A: An award is for five years (assuming satisfactory progress and available funds), and you will not have to give up the award when you receive tenure.

Q: Will I receive the reviewer comments after the review is complete?

A: Yes. We will send reviewer comments to the Principal Investigator at the time the award is issued or at the time the proposal is declined.